



## How to Grow Some Common Herbs – overview

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HERB	DESCRIPTION	WHAT IT LIKES	USES
 Parsley <i>(Petroselinum)</i> <i>(Curly leaf and flat leaf types)</i>	Bushy <b>biennial</b> with rich green, crisped, 2- to 3-pinnate, aromatic leaves, and small yellow-green flowers in umbels in the second year.	Full sun or partial shade, moist, rich, but well-drained soil. Notoriously slow to germinate. Although biennial it is often used as an annual. <b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Sow seeds of annual and biennial herbs</b> such parsley in <b>spring</b> and throughout the growing season at three week intervals <b>until August</b>	Curly leaf often used as a garnish. Light scent and fresh taste it is used in lots of things from soups to sauces to vegetables. Can be used fresh or dried but best used fresh. Often used in middle eastern dishes.
 Rosemary <i>(Rosmarinus officinalis)</i>	Evergreen <b>sub-shrub</b> with light blue white or pink flowers and fragrant dark green, needle-like leaves that are silver on the underside. Bees love it.	Mediterranean plant likes full sun and well-drained soil. All culinary Rosemaries derive from Rosmarinus officinalis, a medium-tall shrub native to Spain, Portugal, and the Mediterranean. Thanks to its heritage, rosemary is rugged. It can handle suffocating heat, stiff winds, salt air, and droughts, and actually prefers lean, rocky, alkaline soil. <b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Heal cuttings in spring, semi-ripe cuttings</b> in late summer, layered or mound-layered in summer.	Often used to flavour roast chicken, potatoes and other vegetables in UK and but most extensively used in French, Spanish and Italian cooking. Rosemary was prized by the Greeks for being good for the brain, and is also known as the herb sacred to friendship.
 Basil <i>(Ocimum basilicum)</i>	Heavily aromatic scent. Half-hardy native of tropical zones –best grown as an <b>annual</b> . Can have green or purple leaves.	Position - full sun, sheltered and warm or a sunny windowsill. Fertile, moist but well drained soil. Pick plants over regularly and removing any developing flower heads to prevent bolting (running to seed). This also encourages new fresh young leaves. <b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Sow seeds of annual and biennial herbs</b> such basil in <b>spring</b> and throughout the growing season at three week intervals <b>until August</b> . After May, you can sow basil <b>direct</b> into garden soil.	Leaves are picked during the growing season and used fresh or dried. Used a lot in Italian cooking - Chop finely over tomatoes or blend with olive oil for lovely fresh pesto.
 Dill <i>(Anethum graveolens)</i>	Decorative aromatic leaves, beautiful when grown in groups. Fine lacy foliage. Umbel yellow flowers early to late summer. Self-seeding.	Sow seed where it is to grow. Well-drained soil in sun. Stake plants in windier sites. Dill is easy to grow and attracts beneficial insects to your garden, such as wasps and other predatory insects. <b>PROPAGATION</b>	Good for fish sauces. Add chopped leaves to green and raw vegetables, especially cucumber. Both the aromatic leaves and seeds can be used in cooking. It is used most commonly in soups, stews, and for pickling.

		<b>Sow seeds of annual and biennial herbs</b> such dill <b>in spring</b> and throughout the growing season at three week intervals <b>until August</b> . Sow <b>indoors</b> shallowly in poor soil in early spring or outdoors in late spring. Thin seedlings to 20cm (8in) apart.	
 Sweet Marjoram <i>(Origanum majorana)</i>	A half-hardy <b>perennial</b> with small, aromatic, elliptic pale greenish grey leaves and small white (sometimes pinkish) flowers in summer and early autumn.	Well-drained moisture retentive fertile soil in sun or part shade. Cut back taller growth to encourage fresh new leaves – keeping some of the flowers for the bees. Sweet marjoram has white flowers. <b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Divide</b> sweet marjoram <b>in spring or after flowering in late summer</b> . Take <b>softwood cuttings</b> in summer. <b>Sow</b> seeds thinly on the surface of the compost in spring	Marjoram is popular in Mediterranean and North American cookery. Add to vegetables, tomato-based dishes, stuffings, sausages, preserved meats, poultry and pulses. Chop the leaves, and stems; add at the end of the cooking time. Sweet marjoram is said to have the most delicate flavour of all the marjorams.
 Oregano (Wild marjoram – <i>Origanum vulgare</i> )	A bushy hardy <b>perennial</b> up to 60cm tall. Aromatic ovate dark green leaves with pink/purple flowers in summer.	Well-drained soil and sun for best flavour. Prolonged damp humid conditions will eventually kill the plant. <b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Divide hardy herbs</b> such as sweet marjoram, Oregano, and thyme <b>in spring or after flowering in late summer</b>	Often confused with sweet marjoram – oregano has a distinctive after taste and is often used to flavour pizzas. Though the intensity of flavour depends on soil, sun and general growing conditions. Actually tastes better dried than fresh.
 Lemon Balm <i>(Melissa officinalis)</i>	Bushy herbaceous perennial, also known as bee balm. A <b>real spreader</b> so beware – or grow in a large pot to control it.	Full sun well-drained light soil. The flavour decreases as plants flower. It is good to leave a few blooms for the bees and cut others back to encourage new fresh foliage. Regularly trimming gold forms will keep their bright, fresh appearance and prevent any all-green shoots from taking over.	Leaves can be used to decorate and add a hint of lemon to summer drinks. The lemon flavoured leaves can also used to flavour ice-cream and teas. Dried leaves can be used in pot-pourri.
 Mint <i>(Mentha)</i>	Another <b>real spreader</b> so beware – or grow in a large pot to control it.	Prefers moist fertile soil. Will tolerate some shade. <b>PROPAGATION</b> Take <b>root cuttings</b> or divide mint <b>in spring or after flowering in later summer</b> .	There are numerous different varieties of mint each with a slightly different taste and smell. The most popular being garden or spearmint which is often used to flavour new potatoes.
 Fennel leaf <i>(Foeniculum vulgare)</i>	Decorative aromatic feathery fronds, beautiful when grown in groups. Umbel yellow flowers early to late summer. Self-seeding. Looks similar to dill.	Well-drained rich soil and sun. (Related to but different from the vegetable fennel bulb)  <i>(bronze fennel = F.v. dulce)</i> <b>PROPAGATION</b> By seed in moist, fertile soil. Can be invasive if flowers are allowed to set seed. If grown with the bronze form then	Fennel leaf has a strong aniseed flavour – much stronger than dill. Both the leaves and stalk are edible. Whole fronds used to flavour fish. Fennel seeds are used in bread and soups.

		they will readily hybridise, resulting in inferior plants	
 <p>Coriander (<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>)</p>	Hardy annual grown both for its warmly flavoured aromatic seeds and for its lemony tasting leaves.	Sunny sheltered position in light rich soil. <b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Sow seeds of annual and biennial herbs</b> such coriander in <b>spring</b> and throughout the growing season at three week intervals <b>until August</b> .	Commonly used in eastern cuisine in a similar way to parsley. Seeds and leaves are both used. The flavour of the leaves is much sharper than the seeds and quite lemony. If ripened seeds are to be used in cooking then the longest possible growing season is needed.
 <p>Tarragon (Russian – <i>Artemisia dranunculoides</i> and French <i>A. dranunculus</i>)</p>	French tarragon has a stronger aroma and taste than the Russian. It has long, soft green leaves and a distinctive aniseed flavour.	Well-drained soil in full sun. Advisable to feed the plants to achieve the best flavour. Pinch out growing tips to encourage leaf growth. Cut down plants in autumn and cover with straw for winter frost protection. <b>PROPAGATION</b> Divide and replant every 3 years in fresh soil – or treat as an annual.	Often used in French cooking. A perfect match with chicken, it can also be used to flavour oils and vinegars. Dried tarragon retains much of the flavour of fresh, so it is fine to use if you can't find fresh. It is also used in béarnaise sauce.
 <p>Sage (<i>Salvia officinalis</i>)</p>	All forms of sage are hardy evergreen sub-shrubs with an attractive and decorative habit.	Sunny well drained but relatively moisture retentive soil. Cut back a few times during the year to maintain a compact bushy habit. Plants can become leggy after a few years so may need to be replaced. They do not tolerate prolonged damp humid conditions well. <b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Take cuttings of shrubby herbs</b> such as sage in <b>late spring</b> .	The slightly bitter oval leaves can be used in numerous dishes – including ones based on meat, fish, eggs or vegetables They keep their flavour well when dried. Often combined with onion in stuffings.
 <p>Thyme (<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>)</p>	<i>T. vulgaris</i> is a bushy dwarf shrub with small, linear to ovate, aromatic, dark grey-green leaves, and terminal spikes of small, whorled, white or pink flowers in early summer	<b>PROPAGATION</b> <b>Take cuttings or divide shrubby herbs</b> such as thyme in <b>late spring or after flowering in late summer</b> . Take <b>softwood cuttings</b> 5-7.5cm (2-3in) long in late spring or summer. <b>Layering</b> in early autumn or mound layering in spring. Sow seeds indoors in mid-spring Best to replace every two or three years to avoid woodiness.	Earthy taste goes well with vegetables and pork, lamb, duck, or goose It's used in Cajun and Creole cooking and Caribbean jerk seasonings. The leaves are so small so often don't require chopping.

RHS advice on herbs [www.rhs.org](http://www.rhs.org)

#### When and where to grow herbs

(Many) Herbs grow best with full sun and light, well-drained, moisture-retentive, fertile soil with plenty of organic matter incorporated.

#### For a continuous supply:

- Sow seeds of ones that rapidly run to seed, coriander and dill for example, on a fortnightly basis throughout spring and summer
- Choose several cultivars, where available, with different maturing times to help to keep the herb garden productive
- Pot up herbs such as chives, mint, parsley, or tarragon grown outdoors and bring them in for the winter, standing them on a south-facing windowsill
- Keep a few **containers** near the house for easy picking
- Pot a few larger containers with stronger-growing herbs such as mint and sage
- Make use of new or used **growing-bags** especially where space is limited
- Start early in the spring by sowing herbs under cloches and frames
- Sow a few trays in a greenhouse, conservatory or sunny windowsill and grow plants on ready for planting out when the **soil warms up**

#### Herbs to try

All of the commonly used culinary herbs can easily be grown in traditional herb or vegetable gardens, raised beds, containers or the mixed border. These include;

Popular annuals: basil, coriander and dill

Biennials: caraway, chervil and parsley

Perennials: borage, chives, fennel, marjoram, mint, sage, tarragon and thyme